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JUL 20 1936

# DRAMA

A MONTHLY RECORD OF THE THEATRE  
IN TOWN AND COUNTRY  
AT HOME & ABROAD



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THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE  
9 FITZROY SQUARE  
LONDON  
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# DRAMA

VOL 14

JULY, MCMXXXVI

NUMBER 10

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THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

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## PLAYS OF THE MONTH

By S. R. Littlewood.

A BUSY and fruitful month has seen, among other outstanding events, the "arrival" of three new authors with astonishingly efficient first plays—all presented in the West End during the same week. It has also seen the resumption of Mr. Sydney Carroll's Open Air Theatre, in spite of all sorts of difficulties, upon its accustomed plot of green-sward in Regent's Park.

To myself—and, I am sure, to many other members of the British Drama League—this last victory over inertia and misprision is particularly gratifying. It was ridiculous that an enterprise which has been responsible for bringing so much unforgettable beauty into the lives of Londoners and their holiday guests should be crippled and abandoned. All that was needed was the obviously deserved tax-remission already granted to the Old Vic, Sadler's Wells and the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon. Thanks to a committee which, I am glad to see includes Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth, under the chairmanship of Mr. Walter Payne, President of the Society of West-End Managers, there seems every prospect of the Open Air Theatre doing London honour every summer. Those of us who know how easy it is to slip into the attitude of least resistance, represented by a band-stand and "Baby's Sweetheart" (with piccolo-solo), will understand the very great deal that this means.

Mr. Carroll was happy at the start, alike in his choice of play and ideal "open-air" weather. "Henry VIII," though neither a perfect play nor necessarily all Shakespeare's own, just suits the Regent's Park setting for its flaunting pageantry, its parade of famous characters, its

bits of fine poetry, its dance and song, its colour and general air of pride, pomp and circumstance. On the other hand it is not so great or sacrosanct that one worried very much if it did not move the heart so profoundly beneath moon and stars and among rustling trees as it might have done from a more intimate stage.

Miss Phyllis Neilson-Terry had the consolation of her always decorative grace as Catherine. Mr. Lyn Harding's Henry, Miss Vivien Leigh's Anne Boleyn, and Miss Hilda Trevelyan's particularly delightful Old Lady were all in happy comedy-vein, with Mr. Gyles Isham's excellently forthright Buckingham and Mr. Baliol Holloway's discreet Wolsey, careful not to overweight the dramatic side.

The three good plays by new authors were "Miss Smith" by Henry Bernard at the Duke of York's, "Winter Sunshine" by G. A. Thomas at the Royalty and "Heroes Don't Care" by Margot Neville at the St. Martin's. These are all three of them so full of hearty fun, genuine character and first-hand knowledge of the world that they make one feel to how great an extent dramatic technique is just a sympathetic understanding of the men and women who make up an audience. Or can it be that the supposed "mysteries" of the dramatist's craft are becoming more and more the producer's affair—in so far as they ever were anything else but commonsense and necessity?

It is true that "Miss Smith," with its paragon of a governess played by Miss Olga Lindo, deals with a novelette-theme so old that it was—quite by coincidence—being burlesqued on the very day after in Mr. Ivor Novello's "spoof" melodrama, "Love Will Find a Way" at the

## PLAYS OF THE MONTH

Theatrical Garden Party. But the ideal governess lives again on the stage probably because she has lived again in real life.

"Winter Sunshine" has the merit of finding an absolutely new and intriguing character for Mr. Nicholas Hannon to play in the blind "crook"-hero, and of making an odd lot of passengers on a liner far more entertaining than they can ever have been in reality, and yet convincingly right.

"Heroes Don't Care," the most consistently brilliant of the three, may owe much to the discovery of a largely unsuspected wealth of comic genius in Mr. Felix Aylmer as the explorer-in-chief. But even Mr. Aylmer could not do what he does if the character were not there already. It also is entirely fresh, drawn from that commonplace humanity with which so few of our more experienced dramatists dare to traffic without a sneer. I think personally that the finish of this play might be altered, with its suggestion of immediate and complete infidelity on Lady Pakenham's part. It is not so much a moral question as that I had grown so fond of old Pakenham as to regret anything likely to cause him serious distress.

Among other plays of the month, "Boy Meets Girl" at the Shaftesbury, with its hard-boiled American humour, is irresistible for a time, but I grew tired—perhaps of laughing; perhaps of the repeated recipe for laughter. "Professor Bernhardi," the Schnitzler propaganda-play at the Embassy, with its Jewish doctor clashing with the Roman Catholic priest, happened to be an old friend. I find again that it is too patently on the side of the Jewish doctor. Schnitzler, being a Jewish doctor, naturally did not realise that a Roman Catholic girl might like to see a priest, whether she was dying or not.

I did not care much about "Kind Lady" the adapted Hugh Walpole story by Edward Chodorov at the Lyric. In spite of Dame Sybil Thorndike's magnificent Grand-Guignol performance, the thing as a whole seemed to me needlessly gloomy, pretentious, and, in its details, improbable. Nor was I very much impressed by Mr. Charles Williams's "Cranmer of Canterbury," which I went down specially to see at Canterbury itself.

A poor thing it seemed, after Mr. T. S. Eliot's "Murder in the Cathedral." Mr. Williams's valiant effort to re-inforce the essential weakness of Cranmer as a central

character by an attendant Skeleton deserves all credit. Certainly it suggests what a good Death in "Everyman" Mr. Martin Browne would make. But was it necessary or of any avail? Has not the time come for us to create a new manner for these symbolic biographies—on the lines of broadcast narrative? How much better it would have been, for instance, if Mr. Robert Speaight could have just read us extracts from Cranmer's beautiful prayers and homilies, with a story of his life and some illustrative tableaux. As a figure, his Cranmer is just his Becket over again.

### G. K. CHESTERTON

Chesterton's contribution to the British Theatre was slight in comparison with his major work, and in the recent obituary notices scarcely a mention was made of him in his aspect of playwright. Yet in the two plays that bear his signature, "Magic" and "Dr. Johnson" there is a natural gift for the dramatic form that makes one regret that more in this kind did not come from him. Chesterton would have probably said that he was an amateur so far as the stage was concerned. A May Day Celebration on the village green was, perhaps, more in his line than a first night at a West End Theatre. Yet Chesterton was so much the artist born rather than made, that nothing which he touched could fail to carry the impress of his genius.

For him to experiment was to achieve. So his first play "Magic" (first produced at the Little Theatre in 1913) was an immediate success, and remains a play that is constantly performed both here and on the continent. "The Judgment of Dr. Johnson" (first produced in London at the Arts Theatre Club in 1932) is fully as actable, and deserves much more attention from play selection committees than it has hitherto received.

Chesterton was sincerely sympathetic with the work of the British Drama League. In the early days of the Festival movement he presided over a memorable meeting held in his own house at Beaconsfield with the object of gaining support for the Festival in that district.

He was also a warm supporter of the Compagnie des Quinze, and I have seen him at several of their first performances in London, that unforgettable figure, kind, magnificent, great in every way.

G. W.

# BUILDING THE COUNTY TOWN PAGEANT

By Douglas P. Blatherwick.

**T**HREE is so much fun to be obtained from Pageantry that it seems a shame that so many people feel that although they are interested in the stage and acting that here is something beyond their scope. There is no reason why the smaller country towns where the brunt of the work is to fall on the amateur should not produce their very own show. It is possible for a Pageant to make large sums of money. It does more—it interests people in their own town.

In this account of the organisation of the country town pageant there may be features that can be cut at other places. Expenses may be minimised very considerably by excluding grand stands, cutting down publicity estimates. The following plans are for a six day Pageant including about two thousand performers and allowing for a maximum attendance of about twenty thousand people.

It is advisable at the very outset to form a considerable number of sub-committees. This not only has the advantage of interesting the support of all shades of opinion but it is possible for the ground work to be thoroughly explored. The following list will give you some idea of the committees that may be formed—Finance, Performers, Horse, Publicity, Properties, Designs, Music, Ground, Lecture, Reception and Correspondence.

The three main problems at the beginning are the site, the expense and the script. Each can make or mar the whole show. If a Castle, an Abbey or a historic or beautiful building is available that must have first consideration. There is no getting away from the fact that even if it may present other problems, such a site has untold advantages. Atmosphere is most desirable—this is an incalculable asset. There is always a temptation in using a too large area. In a small town Pageant it is always well to remember that it may happen that as few as fifty characters will be on the stage at once. They must not appear 'lost.' Action can be more intimate, dramatic and speedy on a small compact stage, and at the same time as colourful as in a large open space.

As I have mentioned before the problem of cost must of necessity differ from place to place. It must be obvious to anybody putting on a week's production that some money must be spent. The weather is the real danger, for a working Finance Committee should be able to clear the other obstacles out of the way. It is apparent that each possible item must be considered in the early stages. This can be done if each spending Committee (Ground, Publicity, Music, Horse and Properties) prepares its own estimates. This must be tackled thoroughly. Estimates are examined and maximum spending powers allotted at the outset. Insurance against bad weather is a costly business and it should be possible to avoid having to take this step by obtaining local co-operation in the form of guarantees. The figures (approximate) in the estimates for the Pageant of Newark-on-Trent to be produced in July 1936 may serve as a guide—for the Committees very carefully explored their ground.

Publicity	..	..	..	£225
Stand to seat 1,400	..	..	..	£250
Extra forms to seat 1,000	..	..	..	£50
Orchestra marquee	..	..	..	£5
Performers marquees	..	..	..	£7
Amplifiers	..	..	..	£30
Additional entrances to				
Newark Castle	..	..	..	£20
Peat moss for paths for horses	..	..	..	£20
Extra stabling	..	..	..	£18
Extra labour for horses	..	..	..	£5
Lavatories	..	..	..	£25
Heavy properties	..	..	..	£25
Stationery, postages, printing	..	..	..	£50
Insurance (fire, compensation, 3rd party)	..	..	..	£10
Orchestra and Music	..	..	..	£40

Nothing has been allowed for costumes, for this expense is borne by the individual performer. Expenses for performers' accommodation have been cut as it has been possible to use a neighbouring warehouse. Publicity covers all brochures, leaflets, advertising and programmes. With regard to some of these the whole cost can be covered by advertise-

## BUILDING THE COUNTY TOWN PAGEANT

ments. Marquees have been obtained on a very low estimate.

The expense of a professional producer has not been included as this must vary. It may not be always necessary.

Whilst nearly a thousand pounds has been allowed for it should be possible to take back at least double that amount. Every conceivable avenue of publicity must be explored. One very useful avenue is through an active Lecture Committee. It is amazing what interest can be fostered by means of talks (especially lantern talks) on local history in the neighbourhood. This must surely result in village parties being organised to visit the Pageant.

The Pageant script must have the strictest attention. It is obvious that history must be examined from the angle of dramatic action. It is not possible to include very often many of the most important outstanding items in a town's history. The Pageant must be constructed like a revue with a series of succeeding climaxes, ending with the highest peak of all. Action, crowd work, and colour must be the outstanding features. Words become almost of secondary importance and should be cut to a minimum. The whole should flow easily. This can be aided very considerably by the use of a Chronicler (as in the Pageant of Parliament) who with a few choice words spans the years between each scene. Simple processions telling a simple story or a country dance as interludes are of far more value than the 'forcing' of a scene that does not merit the importance it would otherwise get. There must always be countless variety. A dose of good humour goes a long way towards making the Pageant a success.

Nothing so far has been said of the performers beyond the fact that they must pay for their costumes. It must be remembered that the success depends upon the *CROWD* and therefore they should be given every consideration. It is undoubtedly dangerous to have a central casting committee. By far the safest procedure is for a Performers Committee to invite local societies and groups to take over completely so many scenes or a whole episode. These groups or societies will then choose their own leaders and produce their own work until such time as the Pageant Master co-ordinates the whole. People are far more willing to accept a part in a crowd

"with" their own society than if they are asked from a central casting committee. This may sometimes mean that the local dramatic 'stars' become temperamental, but unless all who take part appreciate the need for team 'crowd-work' there is danger ahead.

The costumes can be made for very little money. A committee of designers can guide the making of these. The cheapest material can be utilised so that often half-a-crown will dress an alderman or his lady. The most costly costumes can be hired for half a guinea. One had found that the question of expense of costume the first to be raised by all prospective performers and the easiest to answer. The reason why cost of costumes is so important is because it will most certainly be found that the backbone of the Pageant will be crowds of folk to whom four or five shillings is an item of considerable expense. Societies such as political parties, religious organisations, the British Legion, Toc H., schools, Girl Guides and Scouts, all go to make up that important Crowd.

Music, Horses and Dancing go to complete the whole—a colourful, living thing. There is a thrill in Pageantry. And is it not doubled in these days by the possibility of a broadcast or an appearance on a news film? Certainly there is plenty of hard work for many people, but it is worth it!

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### VISIT OF FINNISH ACTORS TO LONDON.

During the week beginning June 22nd, the British Drama League has been concerned with the entertainment of a company of fourteen Finnish actors who have been on a visit to London from the National and other principal theatres at Helsingfors.

Visits have been paid to "Storm in a Tea Cup" at the Garrick Theatre, to "The Seagull" at the New Theatre, to "Glamorous Night" at the Coliseum and to the Open Air Theatre at Regents Park. To Sir Oswald Stoll, Mr. Bronson Albery, and the other Managements concerned, are due our best thanks for their kind hospitality to our guests.

A flying visit was also paid to "Romeo and Juliet" at the Memorial Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, and on other days the company visited the theatrical collection at the Garrick Club, the Theatrical Section at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the Gaumont British Film Studio at Shepherds Bush.

We feel that this is an example of the good work that the British Drama League can do in establishing friendly relations between the English and the Continental Theatre. We need not say what a pleasure it was to ourselves to have the opportunity of welcoming these very charming representatives of the Finnish Theatre.



CABARET COSTUME BY RICHARD BUCKLE.

The body of the dress is yellow with black spots: it is trimmed with alternate frills of yellow and orange and each frill has a magenta edge. Black gloves with red buttons.



SCENE FROM "HENRY VIII" AT THE OPEN AIR  
THEATRE, REGENTS PARK, LONDON, 1936.

# REFLECTIONS ON THE FESTIVAL

By C. B. Purdom

PERHAPS the following reflections may be of interest to those concerned with the Community Theatre Festival. They occurred to me at the Old Vic on May 25th. I thought the Festival was more enjoyable than some recent ones, because there was more appreciation of entertainment values and because there was more ease and competence than ever before. But I wondered to what extent we could be satisfied with what we saw and with the tendencies shown.

Of the five plays, four had hardly any dramatic movement and made very small demands upon the actor. They depended upon rather smart writing and clever staging. The theme of opposition to war common to three of them, was obviously to the taste of the audience, and I find no fault with it, though I was not always convinced of the sincerity with which it was handled. But I do find fault with their slightness, with their absence of climax, with their weak dramatic construction and with the fact that even cut down by threequarters they would hardly come up to the level of a sketch in a Cochran revue. They were mere trifles, jokes, charades. Mr. Cass said of "Twentieth Century Lullaby" that it hardly deserved a place in the theatre because it gave the actors nothing whatever to do. How is it that the adjudicators in four areas came to select such plays for the final Festival? It seems to be ominous for the future of the amateur dramatic movement.

Is it not possible that by concentrating upon these slight, sometimes meretricious, pieces, in which reliance is placed upon tricks of production, amateurs may be destroying their own movement, and that by selecting such plays adjudicators are helping them to do it? Amateur stage work requires a great deal of time and effort, which will be devoted to it only so long as it is felt to be worth while. Those who do the work must get some real satisfaction out of it. Can satisfaction be got out of plays consisting of "smart controversial arguments which seek only after seeming and controversy"? The professional stage lives by virtue of the skill of its actors who have plays worthy of their powers; can the amateur stage live by virtue of anything else?

Not long ago, amateurs devoted themselves to naturalistic domestic comedy, because the

acting of such plays is comparatively easy; the reaction has landed them into plays of highly stylised settings, in which acting is hardly regarded at all. There are limits to what can be done with costumes, settings and lighting; when those limits are reached perhaps that will be the end of the amateur movement.

Amateurs will have to pay attention to acting if their movement is to continue. They will have to demand plays in which something more than charade acting is required. Their present plays, samples of which we had at the Old Vic, contain isolated and detached characters, without dramatic relation, there is no dramatic tension or possibility of it in them, and there is no climax. There is a place for every class of entertainment on the stage. There is a place for the nonsensical, for the sentimental and the farcical, but it will be a pity if amateurs devote themselves to such plays because they are easy. Acting involves ceaseless practice. It means concentration and exercise of the imagination. It means genuine devotion to the art of the stage. Can amateurs undertake this? If they cannot, there is no future for the amateur theatre. If they can, the movement will live and will contribute something to national life; but it will have to change its present direction.

What leadership or help are amateurs getting in this? The Community Theatre Festival should provide some of it. Regretfully I must say that I do not think that was done at the Old Vic. It is ungracious to criticise adjudicators; but moving gingerly over dangerous ground, perhaps I may say that the adjudicators at the Old Vic gave very little help to those who played before them or who listened to them. Except for the protest of Mr. Cass at one of the plays, they succumbed to the occasion. I do not deny that the adjudicators had a difficult task; but they might have offered some serious criticism, they might have shown some awareness of the significance of the Shakespearean scene in such a programme, and they might have said of the other plays—"don't do this sort of thing again." As it was they discouraged the would-be actors, and encouraged those who attempted no acting at all.

The remedy is to be found I think in adjudicators adopting a much higher standard and

## REFLECTIONS ON THE FESTIVAL

in their giving more attention to the marking system. Under that system 40 per cent. of the marks is for acting, 30 per cent. for production and only 10 per cent. for staging. In plays requiring little acting and depending mainly on staging, the marks, if fairly given, must inevitably be low. I suspect that marks are sometimes given to production that should go to staging, which would bring the total higher than it should be. Adjudicators are too ready to praise and to speak of performances being "good" or "very good" when they should criticise what is done. Praise is often misleading

and harmful, and should be expressed with discrimination, not as an easy escape out of difficulties which the adjudicator is not prepared to deal with. Praise rightly given is the test of an adjudicator.

The problem of the Festival throughout the country is the problem of adjudication. If adjudicators take the line of least resistance they will help to ruin the amateur theatre. That is what they are doing now. The plays selected from four divisions for performance at the Old Vic is proof of that statement.

## PHYSICAL TRAINING FOR AND BY THE AMATEUR

By Elinor Loring

QUIET frequently the producer for an amateur company will discover them to be so awkward and difficult in their movement that something must be done about this before proceeding with further rehearsal. He has perhaps no training as a teacher in this branch of work. What is he to do? It goes without saying that some training by a teacher will do more for these people in six lessons than he may at best do in twelve, but if it is really impossible at such a time to procure them such training, I suggest that he should make an attempt upon the following lines—His first object should be to get physical relaxation. To this end he should get them to stand before him in such a way that each has sufficient space to bend in any possible direction with outstretched arms or to lie down upon the ground at full length. He should then ask them to bear in mind those wooden toy snakes and crocodiles which are jointed all along the spine so that they can be made to wriggle in any direction, and in imagining and concentrating upon them to drop their heads slowly forward, by relaxation to feel the weight of their heads drawing them forwards, to let their relaxed loose-hanging arms also drop forward as the movement proceeds, to continue with this movement, and finally

to let their knees relax, so that they find themselves bent in a relaxed hoop-like attitude forwards. Here they should pause in this position, with care to remain completely relaxed. The bent knees should then be gradually straightened while the trunk begins to move back into an upright position, always bearing steadily in mind those spinal vertebrae and bringing them back into position *from below upwards*—raising the head last. This exercise may be done to either side and in many ways varied by foot positions. The second exercise for the spine is even more easily described. Lie on the back. Clasp the right knee with the hands round it in front. Sit up, keeping the free leg still straight on the floor. Then repeat clasping the other knee. If the back is weak the sitting position will first be obtained with a jerk but will soon become smooth and should be done slowly and easily. Sit straight up in position.

Next try to get some relaxation in legs and feet. Lift and shake them easily. Then lift one knee not higher than the hip joint, keeping the back braced and the stomach well in. Try to grow taller. Swing forelegs easily to and fro, then round and round. Swing to and fro twice and the third time swing the whole leg back and forwards from the hip joint and repeat.

## PHYSICAL TRAINING FOR AND BY THE AMATEUR

Next, move the ankle while the knee is raised. You can *invent* ways in which it may be moved. Now for shoulders, arms and hands—work them in this order, in swinging, pushing and other movements which you may invent for them. Your men should at this point practice as a group separately using muscles joining neck and shoulder with head movement. Remember good carriage is not obtained by jerking the shoulders back—many old exercises to this end are definitely harmful. Instead, practice your company standing alternately upon either leg and moving their arms loosely and easily in various ways and in various directions. In this way they will learn balance of the body and acquire a better carriage. Practice also small easy bends of the knees with the feet in all directions, and then all these exercises *with speech*.

Mime does not come within the scope of this article, but these exercises might well be followed with practice of imaginary handling of various materials and textures. The cage exercise in which the student imagines a floor, ceiling, and walls, composed of differing materials and must make clear what material it is that he feels himself to be touching is an example of the kind of mime work which may usefully be preceded by these exercises in which I have attempted to leave scope for imagination on the part of the producer—if he has none he is unlikely to be a good producer. There can be no harm done in attempting such physical exercise if one is careful to hold to the principle that they must be easy and agreeable to do, cause no holding of breath or severe after-stiffness, since the attainment of balance and rhythm for stage purposes is the ultimate aim and not acrobatics or virtuosity as in dancing. Perhaps you may find yourself with a clever acrobat in your midst. Do not be misled into allowing him to lead the rest of the company on into dissipating their energy in striving to the attainment of acrobatic tricks which they will very easily and gladly do. Remember that this physical work is to remain always a *means* to your end, and must never be allowed to obtrude into the consciousness of your audience when finally you produce your play.

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A full report of the League Annual Meeting held on June 26th, will appear in the October number of "Drama."

## TWO ANNIVERSARIES

ON June 22nd the Maddermarket Theatre, Norwich, celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of its foundation and its Founder and present director deserves all possible congratulation. Mr. Nugent Monck has given signal proof of what can be done by an amateur company under expert management, working with consistent idealism over a long period of years. The high standard of this work is known and appreciated wherever the Amateur Movement is recognised. More than that, this theatre has done a service to the cause of Shakespearian production which is unsurpassed by any other playhouse in the land.

A few days earlier was celebrated Mr. Sladen-Smith's twenty-one years of work as producer and later as Director of the Un-Named Society, Manchester. Here again we have a body of amateurs who have maintained over a long period a policy of the highest type of amateur drama. We are glad to publish in this issue a photograph of their recent production of "Murder in the Cathedral."

The Un-Named Society has specialised in a more contemporary type of play than the Maddermarket Theatre, but these two amateur stages have between them covered, almost the whole field of dramatic work.

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Lyons' Amateur Dramatic Society (Cadby Hall Section) recently presented a well chosen programme of four one-act plays in which the players were not slow to grasp the opportunities provided of Comedy and drama, and shewed a high standard of acting and much talent.

In the first play, "Escape," by E. F. Parr, Miss José Rowland and Miss Sheila Wolsey were very promising. Mr. H. L. Benson gave a natural, easy performance.

Miss Phyllis Luck played a difficult part well in Bernard Merrivale's "All Night Service," and a very bright and amusing study of the 'hardboiled' typist came from Miss Olive Coath.

A rather grim psychological study "The Cage," by Philip Johnson, followed. This was produced in good style by Miss Rosa Denton who also played a Cockney neighbour with a shrewd sense of comedy.

"Sad about Europe," a light comedy by Philip Johnson ended the programme. In this Mr. A. W. Halifax gave a distinctive, amusing and virile performance of the American husband.

There was a slight difficulty over words and noises off on occasion which might have been eradicated by an extra rehearsal, but the general management was perfect and the results most gratifying and encouraging.

R. R.

## BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NOTES



THE JOURNAL OF

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MSS. for publication in DRAMA will be considered if accompanied by stamps for return if unsuitable. All enquiries should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary at the Office of the League, 9, Fitzroy Square, London, W.1.

Telephone : MUSEUM 5022.

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MR. PURDOM'S article on the Festival which appears elsewhere in this issue, gives expression to a line of criticism which, to our knowledge, is widely shared. It is something of a paradox that a Festival Final which by general consent has displayed a higher degree of positive achievement than usual, should at the same time induce misgivings as to the trend of the Festival movement as a whole. A careful scrutiny of the plays entered throughout the Festival gives little support to the view that teams are concentrating unduly on any one type of drama. However, the fact remains as Mr. Purdom points out, that the judges in four out of five area finals selected plays that in the ordinary sense could scarcely be called "dramatic." In other words, it is suggested that under the present system teams which have been careful to avoid the normal and, for the actors, the more difficult type of play, started with a premium which, through the various stages of the Festival, stood them in good stead from the competitive point of view.

There is, however, another side to the question. Complete freedom in the choice of play would seem to be essential if the Festival is to retain its value as an index to the prevailing tone of the amateur movement. This freedom is certainly to risk that monotony of which complaint is now made. But how can it be avoided without worse evils resulting? If a single judge visited the five area finals he doubtless could "build" a more effective National Final than is now customary. But, as a sample of amateur work, it might not be so significant. Luckily there is always the swing of the pendulum. We doubt not that in a year or so the "kaleidoscope school of drama" will have had its day. There may be a reaction to drawing room comedy, farce, or even Shakespeare! Monotonous, yes. But richly expressive of whatever moves in the minds of men.

The mention of Shakespeare suggests a word of caution against a certain tendency that is growing among critics of the Festival, a tendency that needs watching if judges are to be allowed any spontaneity in the delivery of their pronouncements. Mr. John Drinkwater's casual remark at the Old Vic that the "Othello" Scene might be regarded as in some sense "*hors concours*" is a case in point. The phrase was promptly pounced upon as proof that the Judges had abandoned the marking system, that no Shakespeare scene could ever win the Festival, that the authority of the Central Festival Committee had been flouted, and that the League itself was in danger of dissolution!

As a matter of fact, the Shakespeare scene was definitely placed fifth by all three adjudicators, and the phrase "*hors concours*" was nothing more than a graceful apology to the Bard, a gesture on the part of an almost over conscientious judge who, after a rigorous application of the marking system, found himself under the regrettable necessity of bowing Shakespeare to the bottom place. Greater tact could not have been displayed. But at the same time it would be a thousand pities if the words in question were to deter Shakespearean entries in future years. Teams should remember that there are many scenes in Shakespeare that do not involve the extreme challenge of the last act of "Othello" or, shall we say, the soliloquy scene in "Hamlet."

# RECENT BOOKS

Reviewed by F. Sladen-Smith

"Footnotes to the Ballet. Assembled by Cary<sup>1</sup> Brahm. Lovat Dickson. 18s.  
"Four Plays." By Lope de Vega. English version by John Garrett Underhill. Scribners. 10s. 6d.

"Radio." By Rudolf Arnheim. Faber & Faber. 12s. 6d.

"Famous Plays of 1935-6." Gollancz. 7s. 6d.

"Miss Elizabeth Bennet." By A. A. Milne. Chatto & Windus. 5s.

"Bitter Harvest." By Catherine Turney. Hamish Hamilton. 3s. 6d.

"A Gilbert & Sullivan Dictionary." Compiled by George E. Dunn. Allen & Unwin. 5s.

"The Petrified Forest." By Robert Sherwood. Scribner. 7s. 6d.

"Nelson." By James Lansdale Hodson. Gollancz. 5s.

"My Lady Wears a White Cockade." by Ronald Gow. Garamond Press. 2s.

"Happy Days." By Wilfred Massey. Garamond Press. 2s.

"Israel Set Free." By H. F. Rubinstein. Cape. 5s.

"Shroud My Body Down." By Paul Green. Williams and Norgate. 5s.

THE ballet in England has not yet produced many books, and some of those which have appeared are none too satisfactory. The subject seems to go to the author's head, and his attempts to explain what he has seen result in a veritable splutter of adjectives. But "Footnotes to the Ballet," in which seven specialists contribute sections dealing with various aspects of ballet, is different. Perhaps, because none of the writers are allowed to go on for long, but, more surely, because each article is a serious consideration of its subject, and not a dull history or a meaningless ecstasy. (The only touch of ecstasy is in the "Appendix" where Captain R. C. Jenkinson, speaking from the front of the house evidently feels that it is all too wonderful.) The articles vary in interest, one of the most brilliant is by Miss Caryl Brahm, dealing with the difficult subject of "Choreography," and another excellent section is "The Rôle" by Lydia Sokolova, where it is amusing to find the authoress in direct variance with Mr. Constant Lambert—whose denunciations of the use of the symphony as a ballet form will be welcomed by many. Mr. Arnold L. Haskell's appreciations of the dancer are, as usual, generous and valuable. On the other hand, M. Benois contrives to be both dull and disappointing on the fascinating subject of "Décor and Costume," and it is difficult to agree with Mr. Antony Asquith's contention that there is a real and deep connection between ballet and film, although in discussing this he manages to tell us a great deal about the film. But here, if you can afford it, is a book to buy and to cherish, especially as the many illustrations are one and all delightful.

"Four Plays" by Lope de Vega, translated by Mr. John Garrett Underhill, brings before the English public, almost for the first time, the work of a dramatist who wrote as many plays as the entire company of English playwrights from 1560 to 1660—beginning and ending over one hundred of his plays in a day apiece!

To select out of 1600 plays four of the best could have been no easy task, but Mr. Underhill, as was to be expected, brings to the work not only expert knowledge, but considerable enthusiasm. The cover assures us that reading the plays is a thrilling experience, and Jacinto Benavente, in an interesting essay at the end, considers there is deep kinship between the English and Spanish theatre of the 16th and 17th centuries. We found it difficult to follow either of these statements; the plays, although full of incident, are rarely thrilling, and are rarely resemble the Elizabethans for one and the same reason—an involved and artificial sense of form dominates them, there are no sudden by-ways and irrelevancies, little real humour. It is a courtly, ordered world, grotesque rather than moving, and whenever it approaches the crude vitality of life (with which the Elizabethans conjured so brilliantly) polite formalism comes to the rescue and all is well. This is not to say that the plays are lifeless, and the last, "The Sheep Well" gives a picture of the sorrows and struggles of the peasant that is in advance of much in the book. The most courtly and artificial is "A Certainty for a Doubt"; "The King the Greatest Alcalde" is a pleasant comedy containing a genuine comic creation, the peasant Pelayo, and comedy also reigns mildly in "The Gardener's Dog." But, although this play is probably the most suitable for production at the moment, it is difficult to see in its extravagant characterization and development the "legitimate sister" to "Twelfth Night" that Mr. Underhill suggests. Indeed, any comparison with Shakespeare at once places these urban and limpid pieces in another and considerably lesser category.

Dr. Rudolf Arnheim's "Radio" is an exhaustive discussion of broadcasting as a distinct art. The book is by no means easy to read, and some of its apparent contradictions and complexities can only be understood by careful re-reading. Dr. Arnheim is a firm supporter of the radio play, attributing to it values beyond the drama of the theatre—but no dramatist worth his salt seeks to give the whole situation in words as he suggests, but is quite as conscious of the visual possibilities of his medium as the radio dramatist should be of the aural. The book is full of instructive information concerning the developments of radio, and the advice to announcers and broadcasters is salutary—how excellent is the tiny description of the old gentleman who could extract a tea-time cosiness out of acts of parliament! The final chapter deals with television, for which the author does not seem to have any particular liking; nevertheless, its advent will inevitably make nearly all the theories and hopes so elaborately formulated in this book, crumble to dust.

"Famous Plays of 1935-6" is a more than usually interesting addition to this useful series. The plays are well contrasted, and it is worthy of note that all are, in essentials, serious work. The most violent is Mr. James Lansdale Hodson's "Red Night," in which the horrors of war are presented so lavishly that its effectiveness is nullified rather than accentuated. Miss Dodie Smith's "Call it a Day" may be the lightest in the volume, but it is a dexterous record of how some of us lived in 1936, and its humour has the slightly bitter

## RECENT BOOKS

tang which distinguishes the best of this authoress' work. Still more astringent is the tang which pervades Mr. Rodney Ackland's "After October," amusing, moving and acid in its penetration. A complete contrast is presented by Mr. Clifford Odets "Awake and Sing!" which, while depicting the tragic struggles of life in the Bronx, contains, in its surging vitality, a restorative message of hope. Much calmer appears the sensitive, careful study of Napoleon's last days in "St. Helena" by Mr. R. C. Sheriff and Miss Jeane de Casalis, and in "Katie Roche" by Miss Teresa Deevy we have one more profound change of atmosphere. But in this play the study of Katie can hardly fail to have exasperating features, and one is left hoping that the unfortunate husband's final remedy will have some measure of success.

It is a question of the outcrop of Brontë plays will be followed by a similar vogue for Jane Austen, despite a recent success. Jane's life and work is apt to make for good reading but negative drama. Mr. A. A. Milne can find no better way of displaying the immortal lady herself than by dramatising "Pride and Prejudice" under the title of "Miss Elizabeth Bennet," and it is a misfortune for Mr. Milne and his public that on the day he finished the work he learnt that a dramatisation of the novel was to be produced in New York, and that just as he had gathered together management, producer and leading lady for his own play, this American version should have arrived in London. However, here is the play, and it is certainly entertaining, as the construction is ingenious and the necessary amplification of scenes and characters has been achieved with remarkable deftness. But not all Mr. Milne's skill can prevent Darcy from appearing, if possible, a more unattractive prig than ever, and not all Mr. Milne's sense of period has avoided a slight modernizing of the whole affair. Miss Austen would have been flattered by the attention, but might have doubted, with us, if the attention had resulted in a very satisfactory play. Miss Catherine Turney's "Bitter Harvest" is one more proof of the great improvement in the standard of play writing which has characterized recent years. The tragic love of Byron for his half sister is treated with firmness and discretion, and the play is an absorbing unforced drama in which most of the characters, at least, are convincing, and by their quality of authentic life add to the poignancy of the situation.

Mr. George E. Dunn has compiled a Gilbert and Sullivan Dictionary so comprehensive that one begins to believe in the famous stories as actual facts; while the fascinating details of first performances and the people responsible for them, as well as innumerable other matters connected with the operas, would make the book interesting even to the unhappy, cloistered few not familiar with Gilbert and Sullivan from babyhood.

"The Petrified Forest" is the symbolic, but not very good title for an exciting drama, showing Mr. Robert Sherwood's innate dramatic skill in a new form. Into the lunch room of a lonely filling station (run by the vital Gabby Maple and her family) at a crossroads in the Arizona desert, come a variety of people, including a vagabond and, later, a gang of bandits who take charge of the place and of the play with remarkable results. It is possible the piece will not rank as one of Mr. Sherwood's universal successes because, despite its gusto, it is mainly the story of a disillusioned man, and sad-minded heroes

are more popular in novels than on the stage. But it is a play; not a re-hash of vague philosophy or a peg for production; and, although it drags during the various revelations which most of the characters feel called upon to make in front of the bandits, the climax is both tragic and gripping. Considerable study and care must have gone to the making of Mr. James Lansdale Hodson's "Nelson." In this care, and in its long cast and many scenes, it resembles many another chronicle play, but in its sensitive treatment of the two leading characters, Nelson and Lady Hamilton it is often outstanding, especially as historic love-affairs are rarely convincing in drama. Mr. Hodson rather clogs the action by scenes between unimportant and uninteresting people, but one finishes his play not only with the feeling that a considerable portion of history has been shown, but that, thanks to his skill, it has been possible to understand it all the better. "My Lady Wears a White Cockade" by Mr. Ronald Gow, is dominated, of necessity, by the figure of Bonnie Prince Charlie, but as the bonnie Prince appears as a weakened, disappointed middle-aged man, the story, despite its romantic setting, is also somewhat weak and melancholy, although much of the dialogue has point and force and there are one or two exciting moments. Improvements have been made since the first presentation, and the play should suit groups in search of good, sincere work containing more than a dash of historical colouring. "Happy Days," by Mr. Wilfred Massey, is labelled a farce, and thus, in some directions, disarms criticism at the outset. But it is not a particularly good farce. Although the complications caused by an essay on "The Happy Home" reach a definitely amusing climax in Act 3—a climax ruined by at least eight pages of anti-climax which follow. However, Miss Cordelia B. Parkenstacker, of the "Daily Comet," is a joy to meet.

# DRAMA IN GUERNSEY

By Josephine Fyffe

THERE is an idea prevalent in England that Guernsey is a wild, sparsely inhabited island almost entirely lacking in modern civilisation. Actually there is a population of 40,000 and even the smallest house can boast electric light, telephone and garage.

Histrionic talent is no higher in Guernsey than in most provincial towns on the mainland, but one is conscious of a sheer love of drama for its own sake, a rich creative vein and dauntless courage and energy.

There are four main producing societies, the chief being the Guernsey Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Club. This, founded in 1927 by Compton Mackenzie and Lady Sackville, opened with Sheridan's "The School for Scandal," in which both the founders took part. This was followed by other notable successes, the cycle ending with Sardou's "Madame Sans-Gêne," Lady Sackville's swan song prior to her departure from the island. The theatre "St. Julian's" was then taken over by the talkies and all dramatic activities were confined to the Central and St. George's Hall.

Undeterred by the lack of a proper theatre, the Society continued to flourish. "Mrs. Moonlight," "A Hundred Years Old," and "The Barretts of Wimpole Street," besides being performed on this island were taken over to Jersey and played to an audience of 1,300 at the Literary Society. The last named play was perhaps the greatest triumph of the club. This was a great deal due to the efforts of Rudolph Besier, the author, who personally conducted the final rehearsals. "The Late Christopher Bean" has now returned from a preliminary presentation in Jersey prior to performances in Guernsey. The last club play of the season was Clifford Bax's "The Rose Without a Thorn" which was due for production in April.

An original comedy—"Black Pepper"—written and produced by Colonel Brousson, was staged successfully by the club in 1934. Last November the Society again struck a note of originality in inaugurating a competition of One-Act plays written and acted by its members. "Not According to Freud," a satire by Eric Douglas, showed real promise—a small gem of condensed wit and satire.

An outdoor pageant based on ancient

Guernsey history, written and produced by Colonel de la Condamine, proved yet again the range and versatility of the Club's activities. This author has been responsible for the majority of the Club's musical shows, of which the light operas of Gilbert and Sullivan and Edward German have been the most popular. Mrs. Dowty, one of the Club's most talented producers, has exhibited a remarkable flair for costume and scenic design.

The Catholic Society, run in connection with the Roman Catholic Church, and in existence for four years, is also a virile, most competent concern. In 1932 its career started with the presentation of three One-Act plays written by local playwrights. Despite adverse criticism this enterprising Society was the first in the field to present farce on the island—carrying off successfully with a talented cast a hilarious production of "It Pays to Advertise" in 1933. "Sunshine Island," a topical review written by a local playwright, David Marsden, gave a note of originality the following year: it proved itself an outstanding event in the annals of the Society. "The Ghost Train" in 1935 owed its success chiefly to the extraordinarily clever ingenuity of the sound effects.

The students of Elizabeth College specialise in Shakespeare. The historical dramas, comedies and tragedies are all given a turn, and as in the days of Elizabeth, the women's parts are taken by young boy actors. The College has a fine record for swift easy productions and simple, effective scenery. "The Tempest" last year was unforgettable for a Prospero who gave a vibrant force and haunting beauty to his long speeches, an Ariel with a delightful singing voice, and the staging of a most realistic shipwreck. The plays are produced by one of the masters, who makes frequent visits to the Old Vic and the Stratford Memorial Theatre in search of fresh and original ideas. The scenery is undertaken by another of the Staff, and his pupils, in the workshop.

An off-shoot of the College is the "Elizabethans." This society has two productions on its list, "A Bird in Hand" and "The Naughty Wife."

The Ladies' College specialises mainly in costume plays under the direction of the

## DRAMA IN GUERNSEY

Elocution mistress. "Henry of Navarre," a 'tour de force' in the Neilson-Terry repertoire, was given a great ovation last year. The College is the second Society to present this play following its release. The author, William Devereux, during a personal interview, gave the producer valuable hints on important points in the Terry production, together with tips on various scenic effects. Last month the students gave a beautiful and sincere

interpretation of Clifford Bax's "The Immortal Lady."

The costumes for all the College productions are designed and carried out by the Principal and Staff.

In this short survey of the drama in Guernsey, I have tried to convey its salient features—the creative spirit and the amazing vitality and whole-hearted enthusiasm of its members.

## THE EXHIBITION OF SCENIC DESIGN AT THE CITY ART GALLERY, MANCHESTER

*This Exhibition organised by the British Drama League in association with the National Theatre Appeal Committee, was first shown at the Thackeray Rooms, Messrs. Derry & Toms, Kensington, London. We have pleasure in printing the following account of the Exhibition, as now transferred to Manchester, by courtesy of the "Manchester Guardian."*

"WE must break down this demand for realism in the theatre, no matter how many playgoers insist on it," said Mr. William Armstrong, the director of the Liverpool Playhouse, in opening the theatre exhibition at the Manchester City Art Gallery on June 19. He referred to overelaboration of scenic design, while admitting that such representations of Lancashire life as the plays of Stanley Houghton and Harold Brighouse demanded, in his view, a realistic treatment.

### DESIGN AND ECONOMY.

The growth of amateur drama in recent years had produced, he said, many excellent and interesting scenic designers. This had been particularly evident in the North of England, and the exhibition contained much work from the Unnamed Society and from the Rochdale Curtain Theatre. The designer in the Little Theatre had contributed much to stage design, and the shortage of money had been a help to his work. "Out of this need for drastic economy has been born an essential simplicity of design which has been all to the good. It is so easy to design elaborate and overdetailed sets with a few thousands pounds at your disposal, but to my thinking the slogan 'Spend what you like' has often been more of a hindrance than a help in theatrical art. The stage designer with a few pounds at his disposal is often the better artist.

"One thing which the new school of stage design has done is to make a theatre audience use its imagination. Nowadays things are

fortunately changing, but we are still spoiled by the over-elaboration of stage illusion, and so few imaginations are called upon to do their work."

### THE REPERTORY THEATRE.

Mr. Armstrong paid a tribute to the pioneer work of Miss Horniman at Manchester in the repertory theatre movement, and urged support of the present Manchester Repertory Company, which, he said, deserved infinitely greater support than it was given. Manchester's reputation as a patron of the arts would be definitely tarnished if it ever allowed its second repertory theatre to close through apathy. It was a thousand pities, he concluded, that the exhibition contained no designs from an established National Theatre in England. That we, a great nation with magnificent dramatic traditions, should have no National Theatre was a sad and sorry business.

Miss Marie Seton, who, with the assistance of Mrs. Wendy Harthan, has been responsible for the section on foreign national and municipal theatres, represented the British Drama League, and proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Armstrong. Mrs. Mary Stocks seconded the vote of thanks.

Councillor F. E. Tylecote, chairman of the Art Galleries Committee, presided, and in expressing sympathy for the aims of the National Theatre Committee pointed out that an enormous amount of money had been spent in London on museums and art galleries, but nothing had been done for the theatre.



SCENE FROM A CHILDREN'S PLAY BY MISS  
JOAN LUXTON'S COMPANY, JUNE, 1936.



"MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL" BY  
T. S. ELIOT. SCENE FROM THE RECENT  
PRODUCTION BY THE UN-NAMED  
SOCIETY, MANCHESTER.

## EXHIBITION OF SCENIC DESIGN

### A CRITIC'S OPINION

On the principle that cookery cannot be demonstrated outside the kitchen it could be argued that theatrecraft has no meaning outside the theatre and that an exhibition of designs and photographs of stage-work shown in a public art gallery, like that at the Manchester City Art Gallery just opened bears as little relation to a play as a set of samples of currants, raisins, flour, and eggs bears to a birthday cake. For a satisfactory theatrical production, like a satisfactory cake, is a composite affair that cannot be judged until its separate elements have been fused into a coherent whole. In that sense, the true art of the theatre is the one thing that is bound to be absent from any exhibition, however, complete, of theatre work.

Nevertheless, such an exhibition can be fascinating, provided the visitor will take the trouble to do a little imaginative fusing for himself. He must remember that the exhibits are not things to be seen and admired for their own sakes, but working drawings or models, inanimate things awaiting the breath of life that can only come to them in the theatre. A design for a costume for Mr. Jones, the actor, is not an imaginary portrait of Mr. Jones as he will appear in Mr. Robinson's excellent play. It is a diagram of the shape and colour of clothing that will help Mr. Jones to create his character as soon as he is surrounded by other given characters, seen against a given background, illuminated by a given amount of light of a given colour, and told how to speak and move by his producer.

The exhibition is divided into four sections. The first room contains designs that are mainly for the amateur stage or for the more experimental of our repertory theatres. The second contains models. The third is devoted chiefly to the work of designers for the professional stage in this country. The fourth is hung with a series of photographs illustrating the theatre abroad.

Of the two rooms devoted to designs, the first is a good deal livelier than the second, as might be expected, for most of the drawings come from a world in which the word "box office" is not used to chase all joy out of the game of putting on a play, and where imagination, spurred on by the need for economy, can take the place of smug grandiloquence backed by a too easy reliance on stage-carpentry.

Mr. Hemingway's designs for the Rochdale Curtain Theatre deserve a good deal of thoughtful study, for in each of them he has solved the play's particular problem by hard thinking and not by applying any stage-designer's ready-made formula. Of particular interest is an exhibit (103) showing the evolution of a production by the Questors of Ealing of Mr. Sladen-Smith's "Wonderful Zoo," from the producer's first hints to photographs of the final sets. One wishes that the same could have been done in the case of Mr. Osborne Robinson's stylish designs for the Northampton Repertory Theatre, which make one wonder how much of their spirit could be preserved in actual production. The Un-named Society shows designs for productions that will be familiar to many visitors to the exhibition.

The models will no doubt be the show's most popular feature, but they should be approached with caution. Most people, attracted by the inevitable appeal of the miniature, will exclaim "How charming!" But every dramatist will ask "Is that the spirit of the play?" and every producer "But will it work?" as he examines every square inch of the acting area to see if it can be adequately lit and adequately seen from the top row of the gallery and side seats of the stalls. For a scene at a theatre is not primarily an effective picture in three dimensions. It must be a background for action—or at least for acting—that can be seen from any part of the house.

The catholicity of the selection committee has resulted in a wild diversity of styles, ranging from the typical full set at Drury Lane, which leaves nothing out, to the Constructivist setting which puts nothing in except a stray collection of planks and ladders. This form of theatrical nudism is now, one understands, defunct. But, like other forms of nudism, it was valuable in helping to get rid of a good deal of nonsense and in clearing the decks for acting.

The photographs in the last room, of State-subsidised theatres on the Continent, constitute a gesture rather than an exhibit. Despite its vaunted accuracy, the photograph remains the least reliable of all systems of giving evidence. These photographs prove beyond a doubt that such-and-such theatres exist, and the legends beneath them state that they produce such-and-such plays, but in what manner they are produced one can only guess.

ERIC NEWTON.

# NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

## THE TWO SUMMER SCHOOLS.

A very full programme is announced for the British Drama League Summer School at Harrogate (July 31st—August 14th). Miss Margaret Webster is lecturing on production and acting and is conducting rehearsals of "Frolic Wind" and short scenes from Shakespeare; a novel feature will be rehearsals by Mr. Richard Southern of "A show" of which the "book" music, scenery and costumes are to be devised and made by the students under his direction. Miss Frances Mackenzie is rehearsing a scene from Obey's "Noah." There is to be a class in elementary stage craft under Miss Padman for those who have to work with small stages and small funds, and there will be classes in costume design and the wearing of period costumes by Mrs. John Fernald and in stage movement by Miss Anny Boalh. A course in stage-fighting and fencing will be run by Mr. Arthur Bracegirdle; Mr. Coo and Mr. Mills will lecture on stage lighting, Mr. Hartop on make-up and Miss Gilliat on school play production. Mr. Richard Southern will also supervise a Theatre Exhibition at which the work of some of the students will be shown.

The School is under the patronage of H.R.H. the Princess Royal and will be opened on Friday evening, July 31, by Bishop Ripon.

The Stratford-on-Avon School (August 31st to September 10th) will be somewhat different in character from Harrogate, as it is not in the same sense a residential school. A considerable part of the programme will be devoted to the study of Shakespearean production, and to visiting the Festival performances. A special feature of the School will be some lectures by Miss Elsie Fogerty on speech, and on the speaking of Shakespearean verse. Miss Margaret Webster will rehearse Shakespearean scenes, and Mr. Sladen-Smith and Miss Mackenzie modern comedy. Mr. Waldo Lanchester will give a performance of his delightful Puppet Theatre.

## THE 1930 PLAYERS.

The 1930 Players gave a programme of five One-Act Plays at the Rudolf Steiner Hall, on June 16th. The first, a brief melodrama, "Crack O' Doom," by C. F. Carr, fulfilled its title liberally. "The Paraquito," a slight sketch by Vere Etheridge, was sumptuously staged, and acted amusingly enough.

"At the Cross Roads," by H. Fletcher Lee, (winner of the £50 prize in the Scottish One-Act Play Competition, December, 1935), was easily the best play. It was original in construction, and informed with a sympathetic and humorous observation of life.

In contrast, "The Promise of Spring," by Kenelm Foss, suffered, and it was a relief to enter the London registry office, the setting of "Getting Her," a delicious farce by Nella Nagra; though why, if a London registry office is such a football scrum, with combatants in it so determined to 'get a cool,' they did not kidnap the prey once it was within vision, was a wonder.

All five productions were excellently staged and acted, and it was a pity, that in all cases, the quality of the plays themselves did not achieve this same standard.

E. SEARS.

## CHEKHOV THEATRE STUDIO.

We have received from Dartington Hall a tiny and beautifully illustrated book which gives particulars of the new School of Dramatic Art which has just been opened at Dartington Hall, Devon, under the direction of Michael Chekhov, nephew of the famous Russian playwright.

The students, who will reside in a special hostel in Totnes, will be expected to attend the School for a period of three years, although the first twelve months will be regarded as probationary. There are full facilities for instruction in every branch of theatrical art, and students, after their period of training, will, should they qualify, pass into a Group which, remaining together, will take the work of the Studio to the outside world.

There is no need for us to stress the beautiful surroundings in which the School will work, and we would recommend anyone interested to communicate with the Secretary, Chekhov Theatre Studio, Dartington Hall, Totnes, Devon.

## THE GINNER-MAWER SCHOOL.

The Ginner-Mawer Summer School of Mime and Drama will be held at the Portman Rooms, Baker Street, W.1., from July 27th to August 7th. The course which will be under the direction of Miss Irene Mawer, will consist of daily classes in Mime, Mime Plays, and Dramatic Rehearsal. Greek Dancing and National Dancing may be taken as extra subjects. Intending students are advised to note that registration must be made not less than three weeks before the opening date. Registration forms may be obtained on application to the Secretary, Philbeach Hall, Philbeach Gardens, S.W.3., together with information regarding Hostels, Rooms, Costume, Time-Tables, Fees, etc. Although the course is designed to cover a period of two weeks, students may join for a single week, if preferred.

## SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN.

On Wednesday, July 15th, under the direction of Miss Gertrude Pickersgill of the London School of Dramatic Art, "Sir Christopher Wren," by C. Whitaker-Wilson, will be presented, at 3.30 p.m., in Wren's Garden, at the Old Court House, Hampton Court, by permission of Mr. Norman Lamplugh. The organisers have made every effort to maintain the atmosphere of a by-gone age, for, in addition to the actual performance, Street Vendors of Old London will proclaim their wares, a Waterman of olden days will punt you to your tea—served by Stuart Serving Wenchies; and at 5.15 p.m., Mrs. Hilliard will give "Street Cries of Old London." Inclusive tickets are obtainable—covering the return journey from London, the performance, the tour of the house and tea; or, if preferred, seats for the play only. As, however, seats cannot be guaranteed after July 11th, intending visitors are advised to make early application to the Hon. Organising Secretary, Miss Cresswell, 32, Knightsbridge, S.W.1., from whom full particulars can be procured.

## NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

### "THE LANTERN PLAYERS."

A new professional company is being formed under the above title to make a short experimental tour in villages in Wiltshire. It is directed by Frank Napier, who was Stage Director at the Old Vic from 1931-34, and has recently been lecturing and adjudicating for the British Drama League.

Making Salisbury their headquarters, and travelling out daily by car, the company propose to perform at village halls for a week or so at the end of July, appearing at a different hall each night.

The programme will consist of one-act plays and mime, as follows:—"Black Night," by John Bourne; "Poor John," a comedy by Sierra; "The Turtle Dove," a Chinese play by Margaret Scott-Oliver, and a new village comedy, "The Wallflower's Wooing," written specially by Jennie Gordon, a member of the company. Mimes will be fitted in to fill the necessary intervals between plays.

The performances are intended first and foremost to give entertainment. But, secondly, they will serve as demonstrations for those interested in drama. The whole programme will be produced with a minimum of apparatus and expenditure, so that conditions will be the same as for local amateurs, who will then be able to see what can be done with very little. They will also be invited to ask questions at the end of the evening and to come up on the stage and examine the costumes, properties, etc., when the company will be prepared to give any help and information they can.

### FESTIVAL OF MIME.

The 2nd London Mime Festival will be held on Saturday, July 13th in the Portland Hall, Polytechnic Extension, Little Titchfield Street, W.1. The festival will open in the morning with the children's classes, the adult and professional classes will be held during the afternoon. A new feature is the section for dance-mime. The adjudicators are Miss M. Gertrude Pickergill, Mr. J. Compton, Mr. Arnold L. Haskell and Mr. Norman Marshall. Applications for the syllabus (accompanied by a 1d. stamp) should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary, 47, Clock House Road, Beckenham.

### CLIFTON ARTS CLUB.

#### DRAMATIC CONTEST.

The Clifton Arts Club announces its Tenth Dramatic Contest for original short plays. The Contest is open to the world. The best plays (not less than six in number) as chosen by the MS. Adjudicator, will be produced in November next, and the First Prize £5 5s. od. and Second Prize £2 2s. od. will be awarded to the plays chosen by the judge as being the best in actual stage performance.

A Special Prize is offered for the best poetic play.

Mr. F. Sladen-Smith, the well-known author and producer, has kindly consented to act as Judge.

Rules and all particulars may be obtained from Mrs. M. L. Gardner, (Hon. Secretary Dramatic Section), 4, Windsor Terrace, Clifton, Bristol 8.

### OXFORD GUILD OF DRAMA.

The Oxford Guild of Drama is organising a second competition for original one-act plays. Plays (which must be unpublished and hitherto unperformed) will be accepted until October 1. The author of the winning play will receive a prize of two guineas, and the play will be performed under the auspices and at the expense of the Guild. The winning play in the last competition ("The Toad and the Poppy," by M. L. Dodds) was successfully performed on June 4th.

Particulars may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, Stephen Wright, 21, Highfield Avenue, Headington, Oxford.

### WIGAN.

At a recent drama festival the Gidlow Senior Girls' School in "X=O" obtained second prize—a good record for a company composed entirely of girls under fourteen years of age. Mr. Conal O'Riordan was the judge, and in his criticism he stated: "The players of the Grecian heroes were, I think, successful, that is to say, more manly in tone and bearing than the Trojans, though it must be added that theirs was an easier scene to fill; but their elocution was also slightly better. All were good." The girls had made all their own costumes, helmets, armour, etc., and had painted the sky-cloth.

### THE GUILDHALL SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND DRAMA.

Judged from a high standard, appropriate to their resources, the Dramatic Circle, composed of Students and past Students, gave very satisfying performances on June 11th and the succeeding evening of the Quinteros' "The Women have their Way" preceded by John Drinkwater's "X=O." A word of praise here to the musicians, for the well-chosen and accomplished rendering of the entr'acte music, under the direction of Mr. John Hollingsworth. A trivial matter, perhaps, but it was a pity the actors were not always kept within the illuminated, and, in this case, the acting area.

"The Women have their Way" presented more difficulties but received excellent treatment from a cast of fourteen, the outstanding feature being the generally good team-work. "The Women" made the most of the clearly-drawn character parts, Miss Peggy Watson's scheming Concha Puerto and Miss Byron Chapman's austere Doña Belén deserving special mention. The male honours were shared by Mr. Norman Walker as Don Cecilio and Mr. Victor Hamel as Don Julian. Both shewed real insight into their respective characters, a tendency on Mr. Hamel's part to over-act detracting only slightly from an otherwise perfect study. Entrances and timing were faultless but two exits were spoilt by masking, probably accidentally, as the production generally was polished. The second play was in two acts. We should have enjoyed a third.

RONALD C. CLARK.

## NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

### "LILION."

Recently the Royal College of Art Dramatic Society gave three performances of Molnar's "Lilom." This is a splendid play, of such warmth and colour, variety and liveliness, giving so many opportunities for producer, actors and scenic designer. One wonders why it is seen so little.

This was a singularly happy production, devised by John Burrell. In the prologue, cleverly staged as a shadow play, one caught just the right spirit of the fair, with Lilom's gigantic shadow cast across it, that is the keynote of the play. Lilom, with his queer mixture of heaven and earthiness, is a difficult character to interpret. He and Julie are so inarticulate. But in this production, one had two players who managed to suggest the emotion they were never able to express to each other. There is a large cast and a medley of scenes. But it is Lilom's play, Lilom's queer perplexing mind, that one follows so eagerly throughout. It was thanks to the producer that one had this clear picture of the roughneck hero and his Bunyan-like adventures.

H. M. G.

### PUBLIC PERFORMANCE OF GRAMOPHONE RECORDS.

During the last few months, Phonographic Performance Limited have been advised that several teams competing in the Drama League Festival would require records in their productions. These Societies were duly communicated with, but it appears that not all have applied for the annual licence issued through the League, nor did we receive any official intimation that the records would not be used in the productions in question. It is known that at least one preliminary festival records were used in some of the productions for which the Company's licence had not been obtained. We are requested to state that such procedure is illegal, and that all Societies intending to play gramophone records in public should communicate with the British Drama League in regard to the very generous terms which the League has arranged for such public performance with Phonographic Performance Limited, the organisation which represents the manufacturers of the records.

### UNDUE RETENTION OF PLAYS.

A common complaint on the part of playwrights is that Managements too often retain MSS. submitted for months, and often years, without coming to any decision. It seems that this abuse is not confined to the Professional Theatre. Amateur Societies can be no less guilty as is shown by an instance recently brought to our notice as follows. A well-known author, on request from a local amateur Society, sent his play by return of post. No acknowledgement was received. A month later the author wrote asking for some information. Again no notice was taken. Three months elapsed before the MS. was returned. This obviously is an excessive time for any Amateur Society to keep the work of an author who, in order to meet the demand has to have plays copied over and over again, which costs a considerable proportion of any royalty fees obtainable. Some agents now make a charge in the shape of a deposit on MSS. lent to amateur Societies. If the abuse continues it seems as though individual authors will be wise to adopt the same method.

### AN AMATEUR OPEN-AIR THEATRE.

Richmond has been holding a Shakespeare Week, and six performances of "As You Like It" were given on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, June 24th-27th, including two matinees, in the Terrace Gardens, Richmond Hill. No more beautiful setting could be found in the length and breadth of England than that in which these performances were given. There the players found a natural open-air theatre, with a background of Surrey Hills rising high in the distance. The terrace afforded a perfect theatre. Aided by some excellent costumes and beautiful lighting the Richmond Shakespeare Society succeeded in giving us a performance of "As You Like It" worthy of such a perfect setting.

The Play was produced by Jack Carlton, and in a long list of players it would be invidious to single out any one performance. Mrs. Eriksen, the Organising Secretary, is to be congratulated on having secured permission from the Richmond Corporation to use the Terrace Gardens, and we wish her every success in her efforts to form a permanent amateur open-air theatre in Richmond.

J. R.

### LATEST RELEASES.

"Distinguished Gathering," the successful 'thriller' by James Parish, is now available for amateur presentation. The action of the play takes place in one interior set, and there is a cast of ten men and four women. The agents are Messrs. Samuel French, Ltd., to whom applications for performance should be made.

The same publishers have recently issued an acting edition of Pinero's "Trelawney of the Wells," at the price of 2s. 6d.

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### THE HOLIDAYS.

The Library will be closed from August 10th-29th, for the Annual Stock-taking and cleaning.

"Drama," as usual, will not be issued in August and September.

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